Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

1
F76C

U.S.D.A.

LIBRARY
U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Circular no. 2 -

FOR INFORMATION .

U. S. Department of Agriculture,

FORESTRY DIVISION,

Washington, D. C., ... *1887.*

A CIRCULAR TO EDUCATIONAL MEN.

The Forestry Division of the Department of Agriculture, primarily created to promote a popular understanding of the vital interests which are centered in the forest wealth of the United States, has directed its principal effort hitherto towards investigating the conditions of the forest areas of the country, and the rapid decrease of the most valuable sources of supply, and has shown the need of inaugurating a new system of forest management and reproduction, by which alone the perpetuation of an ample supply of forest products, so vital to national prosperity, can be secured.

The array of statistics collected and reported already by this agency should suffice to awaken greater popular interest in the solution of so momentous a national problem than has thus far been manifested.

Hitherto we have destroyed our forests for the sake of immediate pecuniary gain or convenience, with reckless disregard of consequences or of the future supply of a material so valuable and even necessary for almost all pursuits and for the comfort of all classes. The history of other countries, which by the denudation of their forests have lost their agricultural fertility and which have suffered also from great climatic changes, should be sufficient warning to an intelligent people like ourselves to guard against a similar experience by taking measures in season to arrest the course of destruction which has prevailed and to adopt a system of wise forest conservation.

In marking out the line of future work to be undertaken by the Division of Forestry, the Commissioner of Agriculture deems it of great importance that those to whom the shaping of the intelligence of the coming generation is intrusted should be specially invited to take a calm consideration of this long-neglected subject.

Schools of every grade, without departing at all from their proper work, can supply some practical lessons in regard to the object and use of forests, the nature and growth of trees, and the significance of their existence or absence, awakening thereby the interest of pupils in a kind of knowledge too little fostered in the schools of the agricultural classes.

In schools of the higher grade it can be united with instructions in botany and natural history in general. In colleges forestry should be presented in lectures on its various relations to arboriculture, agriculture, and political economy.

Engaging thus the popular and higher education, we may establish a popular system of forestry suited to the peculiarities of our country and its people. We shall foster at the same time sympathy with rural objects, which will tend to make our youth content with rural life, instead of being overcome by the attractions of the great cities.

The Commissioner calls special attention to the value of object-lessons in any branch of study, and recommends to all heads of the higher educational institutions, as far as in their power, to cause the grounds of their respective institutions to be planted with collections of forest and ornamental trees and shrubs, grouped in accordance with their botanical relations or with a view to successful growth by a system of judicious mixing of kinds for mutual protection.

A general adoption of this recommendation would soon convert the much neglected grounds surrounding our colleges and schools into park-like groves of great attraction, the exponents of correct taste in ornamental planting, and perpetual volumes of forest botany and arboriculture.

In like manner might the study of botany be promoted and popularized by the culture of representative kinds of plants united in accordance with their systematic relationship. Botanical parterres of plants, both economic and ornamental, might easily be introduced into the school grounds of the country, through which much useful information, both practical and scientific, would be imparted, assisting rural life in its onward course to a higher plane of culture.

The Commissioner will take pleasure in promoting the adoption of his recommendation, as far as in his power, by contributions of plant material, and has especially instructed the western agent of the Forestry Division, Prof. M. G. Kern, of St. Louis, Mo., a professional landscape-gardener, to correspond with all who desire further information or advice in the design and improvement of the grounds of Educational Institutions.

If this recommendation meets with your favor, and you desire to avail yourself of the proffered aid, please fill out the inclosed blank and return it with your reply.

Respectfully,

NORMAN J. COLMAN,

Commissioner of Agriculture.